

Tracaulon perfoliatum (L.) Greene in Maryland

by

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The genus Tracaulon is represented in Maryland by three species, T. sagittatum (L.) Small, T. arifolium (L.) Raf. and T. perfoliatum (L.) Greene. Fernald (1950) remarks, regarding this species from eastern Asia, that T. perfoliatum is becoming established in nurseries in Pennsylvania and may become a troublesome weed. Sometimes classified as Polygonum spp.

The nurseries referred to are in York County, Pennsylvania. So, it was not surprising to find in 1968 large stands of Tracaulon perfoliatum along Deer Creek, at The Rocks, Harford County, Maryland. Harford County is the next county south of York County on the west side of the Susquehanna River. Later, the author found it further down Deer Creek near Darlington along Glenville Road and at Schweers Landing on the Susquehanna River.

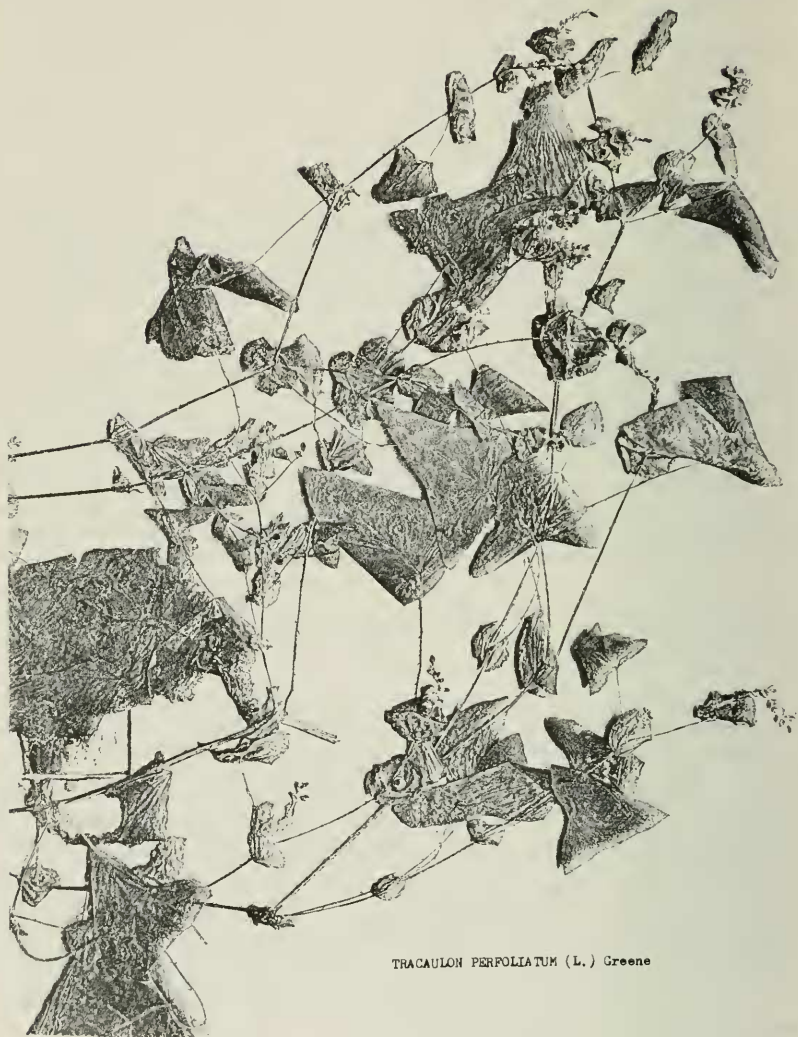
More recently this troublesome weed has been found by the author near Cub Hill not far from the Big Gunpowder Falls, along Jones Falls near Bare Hills, and along Upper Beckley Road near Brick Stone Road in northern Baltimore County, and near Manchester in Carroll County, Maryland.

In 1977, I considered this weed a menace and included it in my book, 'Economically Important Foreign Weeds, potential problems in the United States, USDA Agric. Handbook No. 498: 233, with the following description and noted.

Scandent glabrous annual herb; stems much-elongate, branched, 1-2 m. long, sometimes longer; stems, petioles and along veins beneath leaves retrorsely prickly; blades glaucous or pale green, 3-6 cm. long and as wide at the truncate to shallowly cordate base, acute or subacute at apex, margins minutely retrorsely scabrous; petioles nearly as long as blades; sheaths scarcely tubular, the dilated leaflike limb orbicular, perfoliate and green; spikes 1-2 cm. long, subtended by an orbicular, leaflike bract, the pedicels short; perianth 3-4 mm. long, pale greenish-white, the segments broadly elliptic, becoming fleshy and blue in fruit; fruit 5 mm. in diameter, inflated with the dried perianth more or less persistent; achene indurate, about 3 mm. in diameter, nearly globose, exclusive of the persistent base, smooth, shining black, or reddish-black under magnification.

Weedy in damp areas, along streams, gullies, spreading to gardens, fields and edge of woods and thickets.

Native to Eastern Asia (Japan, where it is a harmful weed throughout; Korea, China, Taiwan, S.E. Asia and India). In the United States it is known at least at this time in southeastern Pennsylvania and northeastern Maryland, but is spreading rapidly southward.



TRACAUION PERFOLIATUM (L.) Greene

Annotated specimens of Maryland records

- Harford County: Numerous plants along Deer Creek, near The Rocks, picnic grounds. Aug. 5, 1968. Reed 85672-B; common, forming dense scratchy thickets along Deer Creek, St. Clair Bridge Road and Holy Cross Road. June 5, 1971. Reed 91655; Deer Creek State Park, The Rocks, June 5, 1971. Reed 91644 and 91649; common along Deer Creek near Cherry Hill Road, The Rocks. July 17, 1971. Reed 91513 (seeds cited as 91573); dense thickets along Deer Creek at Rt. 161, opposite Glenville Road, near Darlington. Aug. 11, 1977. Reed 102816; also in gardens here.
- Baltimore County: Weed in garden, Cub Hill, near Big Gunpowder Falls. June 24, 1977. Reed 100813; same locality. June 24, 1978. Reed 101841; same locality. Oct. 16, 1977. Reed 102108; thicket along Jones Falls, north of Bare Hills along Falls Road. Oct. 23, 1978. Reed 102111; along creek, Upper Beckley Road, near Brick Stone Road, northern Baltimore County. Oct. 18, 1978. Reed 102110.
- Carroll County: Along creek near Manchester, off Hanover Pike. Oct. 18, 1978. Reed 102112.

This weed has become a troublesome plant in less than ten years, at least along the Deer Creek in Harford County, especially in the Deer Creek State Park where picnickers and campers are being annoyed by the dense thickets of scratchy stems, petioles and leaves. The fruits are blue and quite attractive, perhaps so to birds, and so probably account for its rapid distribution to the Gunpowder and Jones Falls drainages in Baltimore and Carroll Counties in Maryland. The Manchester site is not far from the drainages of the Patapsco River, and the fruits could be carried to the Monocacy and Potomac drainages within a few miles. Also the bouyancy of the blue bladder-like perianth about the seed allows the seed to float downstream. This is one weed that should be exterminated before it gets distributed any further in Eastern United States.

References

- Fernald, M.L. Gray's Manual of Botany, 8th Edition, p. 588. 1950.
- Kasahara, Y. Studies on the Weeds of Arable Land in Japan, with special reference to kinds of Harmful Weeds, their geographic distribution, abundance, life-length, origin and history. Ber. Ohara Inst., 10(2): 72-109. 1954.
- Reed, C.F. Economically Important Foreign Weeds, potential problems in the United States. U.S.D.A. Agric. Handb. No. 498: 233, illustrated by Regina O. Hughes. 1977.

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